#1 SLIDE A. Friday, April 16, 1982. Session I, Chicano Art Movement in California: Iconography and Ideology. Slide presentation by Eduardo Carrillo. Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, moderator, introduces--Shifra Goldman, slide presentation. (to end of side #1 A).

EDUARDO CARRILLO

This is a slide of a Time magazine advertisement informing us of how this oil company is beginning to use corn alcohol to add to make automotive fuel. I was struck by how much the gasoline pump looked like the statue of CHALCHIHUATLIQUE the water goddess and preserver, protectoress of the corn crops, which was the principal crop in Teotihuacan.

So we see a little bit of Mexico being brought into the United States by way of Lake "Texcoco." Ah, I mean "Texaco." Next (slides of freeway view of city). The source of automotive fuel is very important to Californians, especially in the south where as elsewhere, the entire economy is based on the rapidity of movement of people and goods.

We are living in a society that requires a great deal of movement (referring to slide). I am sure the Architect of the State Highway Commission did not order the sign of Olin that is seen by this artist in this freeway intersection. Olin is the Nahuatl word for movement, the seventeenth Aztec day sign. This sign is seen all over the Southwest on representations of the Aztec sun stones that appear on market advertisements and calendars. If you look at the center of the sun stone you see the sign of Olin.

In the Southwest and here in California we are living in a multi-lingual society and we are living in a society in which the minority group is largely of Mexican descent. The advertising of merchandise is seen in many places in Spanish as well as English. We see signs advertising carne and menudo at

at 49¢ a pound in East L.A.

The automobile that has been put to a different use by the Chicanos--it is not the utilitarian object that it was originally designed to be in Detroit. The car is used for low riding the streets of whatever boulevard in Los Angeles and elsewhere in California where cruising takes place. And you can see lines of cars bumping and scraping along. The interiors of some of these cars are very baroque in form, customized with multiple mirrors, with crosses dangling from them. The chain link steering wheel, tuck and roll upholstery are amenities which speak to a more baroque rather than classical form. (photographs are by Cruz Zamarron and Salvador Casillas).

In this slide we see the car is made to be much more cat-like than General Motors intended when they gave the "Chevrolet" its name. The Chicano has a long history associated with the cat. Perhaps one of the first religious symbols of meso-America was the cat or nocturnal tigre of the Olmecs (the Rio Chiquito monument has been interpreted by some as intercourse between a "tigre" and a woman. In ancient terms the intercourse between the stars at night and the earthmother).

We see this van parked in front of a colonial building. The building facade has some columns--these are not classical. The classical column has flutes or a slight bulge. It is made to support a great weight. The columns that you see in this building are not like that. They are eroded away, under cut, one could say they defy gravity. The baroque artist or churriqueresque artist who began this form and popularized it in colonical Mexico uses the column through its undercuttings and defies support. The stone mass soars upwards miraculously seemingly without limits, suspending logic or reason. The church we are looking at is not an old church. It is not

made of stone, but cast concrete in the 1930s in Los Angeles and imitates the Churigueresque style with its "estipedes" somewhat like (next) the Sagra Metropolitano built adjacent to the cathedral in Mexico. This church was built at the close of the Eighteenth Century. The architect was Lozano Rodriquez and the facade was designed by Jeronimo De Balbas who was known as "El Architecto."

The total desregard for gravity is expressed in the building. The story goes that this Sagragio sunk seven or eight feet in the first 100 years. The reason being that the architect misjudged the foundation system of the stone platform on which he built the Sagragio. And the building began to sink into the ground from the weight. The form expresses an unconcern for destiny in this defiance of gravity. Next.

Aren't pant legs also columns? Are there really legs under these pants? We see the symbol of stance as an important symbol in the Chicano community. I can remember (as a six year old child in Los Angeles) what the Los Angeles Times called the zoot suit riots. Luis Valdez brought the whole era back with "Zoot Suit." As I see it these pant legs, these folds are a sign of colonialism. Next we see images like the one from "Arte Del Barrio Magazine" showing this vato in a certain stance, the virgin de Guadalupe tatooed on his chest. Next Judy Baca, an artist who showed this piece in the Califas show in 1981, has explored the theme of stance in her tryptich showing the pachuca of the 1940s and the cholita of the present day on each side and in the center a mirror, where the artist sees herself in her present metamorphosis. The back of this piece is also cushioned and upholstered in red velvet.

A few more versions of stance--these are drawings that were submitted for

The Virgin de Guadalupe image has a predecessor in pre-Columbian culture. Here we see her represented by Saturnino Herran in his version of "Coatlique" who is the Earth mother. If you look closely we see a crucified figure superimposed who can also be seen as a Quetzalcoatl figure since both are sacrificial figures. Next slide is a "cihuatateo" or goddess of women who die in their first child birth, painted by one of the members of the R.C.A.F.

The use of religious imagery is also present in the Mexican/Chicano home. I remember my abuelitas and their houses with their little altars set up in the house with holy cards, candles, pictures of loved ones and other memorabilia. There is a reemergence of this form among Chicano artists. Here is an altar, done in 1977 with the altar being a hologram by Rene Yanez. In "Califas" he also made a very modernistic altar dedicated to the Califas artsts. On the altar are pencils and pens and brushes instead of candles. The Califas artists are then called upon presumably to illuminate the world with works of art. The altar was these homemade chilis that Rene made out of wax.

Amalia Mesa-Bains is an artist well known in Northern California for her "altares." This one is an altar doe "Dia de los Muertos," day of the dead. We see this opulent display for the dead who are said to return to the earth on this day. Perhaps it is also "Cihuatateo" that comes back to us as "la llorona" crying and looking for her children. The idea of death is explored by many Chicano artists. Here is a small watercolor by Roberto Chavez. I believe it is called "the appointment" and the other slide is a small watercolor showing the small entryway to the rollercoaster here in Santa Cruz, done by Eduardo Ramos-Cadena. For me it has a mysterious ominous quality

to it. It is like an entrance to the underworld. The sign above the doorway says "no smoking on ride, only two to a seat." As far as a local tradition is concerned, I came to the area in 1972. In 1974 three former UCSC students painted this mural in Watsonville. They were Alex Espinoza, Carmen Leon, and Vickie Petrovitch. They were invited by the owners of the Mona Lisa Cafe to paint a mural on the exterior walls of the building. This mural contained many religious images both from the pre-Columbian and colonial times. Here we see the Virgin of Guadalupe and a crucifixion done in the manner of Alfaro Siqueiros with the Indian tied to the cross as that artist did it in "America Tropical" on Olvera Street in Los Angeles. About this time we began to get into Antonio Rodriquez's book on Mexican murals which had just come out and through this book myself and others in the area became aware of the Alfaro Siqueiros work and other muralists of the Mexican social art movement. There were also artists who had the opportunity to work with Siqueiros directly who were also working on murals in Berkeley in the 70s. Ray Patlan was one of them. El maestro Siqueiros was an ultra-baroque artist. This "tigre" climbing up the wall is in polished metal relief. The baroque is also expressed in this work by Siqueiros in the Palacio de Bellas Artes entitled "New Democracy." The heroic female figure with outstretched arms breaking out of the chains that bind her to the social and economic inequities of the past. These uplifted arms solidly painted in perspective by Siqueiros have been inspirational for subsequent Chicano artists.

After getting more interested in Siqueiros's work I worked on this painting called "Las Tropicanas" in 1972 and 1973. The painting is 7'x11' painted with oil on wooden panel.

Here is a detail of the Iguana that is one of the figures that compose the central area. The iguana is suspended in air as are a group of skeletal figures that are invading the scene.

Another artist who was involved in religious and pre-Columbian themes was Manuel Hernandez early in the Chicano art movement. He was showing his work and exerting some influence in the Bay Area in the early 70s and I understand he has moved south since then. Here is a crucifixion by Hernandez.

We are faced with this problem of trying to recapture the pre-Columbian art in a significant way. They tried to recapture it when there was interest in rebuilding Teotihuacan, the Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio, in an effort to recapture the spiritual effect of the place brought in Francisco Goita, a man of great spiritual and artistic strength. Francisco lived at Teotihuacan for some time absorbing the psychic energy, in an effort to come into contact spiritually and intellectually with the Indianness in himself.

If this is something we must do as artists, I find it very difficult just going through the educational system for 12 or 16 years. Already I have this way of thinking that I don't think can change. I think some artist, some curandero, some dancer, is more able to capture the spirit. And since Chicanos are in the process of, among other things, rediscovering the indigenous past, this will be a hard hurdle to get over, because no matter how much we sympathize, or romantically want to place ourselves in the pre-Columbian era, to actually construct something that has power in molding reality I think is going to be very difficult. In Mexico, in folk culture, the maintaining of

these traditions, is found in the Day of Santa Cruz, in which two opponents in jaguar costumes fight so they say to keep the sun going around. A Huichol going into a trance induced by peyote. These traditions have power if people believe them.

We still have some old people around who still save their art. These people are from the Mezcala River Basin. They are holding on, not selling these things to U.S. collectors, though they could get a lot for them. They are saving them as a retension of their pride.

Many Chicano artists including Ramses Noriega, here in this slide, are involved in rediscovering the indigenous past and he is involved with this memory system expressed in his "Pensamiento Caracol." When I went to see Ramses at his house in San Diego there were all these caracoles in the grass. In his yard, there are also a bunch of heads that look like they came from Teotihuacan. He says these are not important, these are done by students. I think he really likes them.

Maybe one of the greatest possibilities we do have in creating stance, stature and solidity is Chicano Park. Chicano Park was established in the early 70s and was a piece of land that had to be fought for by the artists and Chicano community in Southern California.

We see a bridge support by Salvador Roberto Torres. Another bridge support with this painting of Frida Kahlo supporting the images of Los Tres Grandes of the Mexican Social Art movement, by Rupert Garcia.

We have to look into ourselves as artists in terms of the indigenous past, this is important work and there are not many people equipped to do this work yet it will get done somehow.